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27 July 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Some Preliminary Views on Soviet Policy at Geneva

INTRODUCTION: SOVIET POSITIONS ON THE GENEVA ISSUES

1. Soviet policy at Geneva, as we had estimated, remained largely fixed on the positions which Soviet spokesmen outlined in advance. There was no retreat from the insistence that German reunification must be delayed and must eventually be brought about by negotiations between the two Germanies, that security arrangements satisfactory to the USSR must eventually bring the dismantling of NATO and withdrawal of US power from Europe, and that the banning of nuclear weapons must be the central feature of any disarmament scheme. If anything, the Soviets were less flexible on these issues than we anticipated. They made little effort to indicate that they were ready to take interim steps, even deceptive ones to make future negotiations seem promising.

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It has not been coordinated with any of the IAC agencies.

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2. Despite the continued Soviet rigidity on the substantive issues, which remained little changed from the Berlin meeting, the Soviets made every effort to insure that the net impression left should be that "positive results" had been achieved. The Soviets seemed content to have the "success" of Geneva rest entirely on establishing a new atmosphere of good will, and they worked for this no less assiduously than the Western delegations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FURTHER COURSE OF SOVIET POLICY

3. Soviet conduct at Geneva indicated that this conference would be only the beginning of a long phase of negotiations, and therefore the Soviet rigidity on substantive issues does not prove that no shifts will occur at some future stage. The importance of the Geneva episode from an intelligence point of view rests on whether it provided indications of such future shifts. Such indications would have been derived mainly from the private and social exchanges rather than from the formal meetings. Thus far the information available to us on this aspect of the conference is too scanty to permit judgment. What follows therefore represents little more than preliminary impressions.

- 2 -

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4. While it rests largely on intangibles and on the "feel" of Soviet behavior, we shall probably conclude when the evidence is in that there is good reason to believe that the Soviets now intend the present conciliatory phase of their policy to be a prolonged one. They refrained from the attempts to score cold war debating points which had turned all conferences of recent years into propaganda contests. Treatment in Soviet domestic propaganda of developments at the conference was optimistic and reasonably objective. The Soviet representatives did not press issues in the Far East, attack US "imperialism", or agitate other issues solely for the purpose of sowing divisions among the Western allies. They tried in every way to make it plain that they wanted negotiations continued.

5. Nevertheless, their desire for continuing contacts seemed inspired more by the hope of stabilizing the status quo than by any expectation of settling issues. Both the argument they presented in support of their positions, almost in a perfunctory way, and their general behavior suggested that they would be satisfied if all that was achieved was an atmosphere of reduced tension. In short, they seemed to want detente without settlements. This conforms with the estimate of Soviet motivations which we made in

- 3 -

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mid-June, that while the Soviet leaders felt concern about certain problems in the long term, they did not feel under immediate compulsion to alter the substance of their policy. Geneva left the impression that they felt that they can cope with their problems if cold war tensions can be tamped down for a while, and that this latter condition can be achieved without settlements involving retreats or sacrifices on their part.

6. The feature of the new Soviet tactics which stood out at Geneva was the apparent intention now to apply the relaxation of tensions treatment to the US as well as to the other Western allies. This had been forecast on the level of cultural and social contacts for some months past, but found particular expression at Geneva in the cordial treatment accorded the President. Obviously the Soviet leaders had decided that Marshal Zhukov's relationship with the President offered a dramatic opportunity to document the new line, and almost certainly the Defense Minister's presence at the conference was intended primarily to exploit this opportunity. If social and cultural contacts with the US are promoted further in coming months, and Zarubin stated that they would be, this can probably be taken as further evidence that the Soviets intend to (suspend) the cold war for an extended period.

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7. Tentatively, the impression left by Geneva is that the Soviets are less concerned than has been previously estimated about the immediate threat of West German rearmament. In addition, it has become even clearer that they intend to deal directly with the Germans on the problem of Germany, or at least to give both the Germans and the West the impression that this is their purpose. The whole statement of the Soviet position on Germany was obviously designed to demonstrate to the Germans that the Western "position of strength" would not be sufficient to compel the USSR to concede the unification of Germany on the West's terms. The Soviets are evidently willing to wait for this realization to take effect in West Germany in the hope that they will gain more maneuverability on the German problem. They may feel that future developments, once the West Germans begin to act on the belief that the present association with the West will not restore German unity, will offer the USSR other alternatives than those now available. The Soviets may believe:

- (a) That the West Germans will be slower to rearm, grow less enamored of their alliance with the West, and eventually become more willing to deal directly with the USSR; or

- 5 -

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- (b) That the West Germans will rearm as planned and assume an increasingly hostile attitude toward the USSR, with the consequence that frictions will develop between them and their Western partners; and
- (c) That in either case, the USSR could hope to settle the German problem either with the West or with the Germans on more favorable terms than are possible at present.

Until such developments take place the Soviets apparently regard the status quo in Germany as tolerable, and look forward to its continuance for some time. Probably a principal consideration with the Soviet leaders is that continuation of the status quo in Germany, as opposed to accepting the West's present terms for a German settlement even with all the proffered guarantees, seems to them to offer better prospects for the political and military security of their Satellite empire.

8. Prior to the conference there was some disposition in the intelligence community to believe that the subject of disarmament offered the best prospects for some advance toward at least

- 6 -

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limited agreements. The indications on this point which Geneva provided were scarcely more promising than on the other issues. While the May 10 proposals were repeated, there was no attempt to respond to the West's concern over the deficiencies of that scheme with respect to inspection, and the "ban the bomb" theme was revived. The Soviets obviously regarded the President's sensational proposal for disclosure and aerial inspection as propaganda dynamite which required slow and cautious burial, and realized as well that any attempt to cavil about it would risk vitiating the atmosphere of amity which they wished to come out of the conference. While Geneva did not prove that no progress will be made on disarmament in future, we can probably safely estimate that if there is to be any progress at all it will be of only a very limited kind. The Soviets are unlikely to be as willing as Western statesmen to separate disarmament from political and security questions.

9. Reports on what the Soviet leaders had to say in private gatherings about their practice of collective leadership suggest that their remarks on this subject carried conviction. They implied that a fairly wide circle of the higher Soviet officialdom was now brought into policy discussions. Perhaps in part because

- 7 -

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of these indications that no single hand was in charge of Soviet policy, there was some speculation in the US delegation that there were differences of approach between Bulganin and Molotov, the former being genuinely conciliatory and the latter his old self. Intelligence would probably do well to be extremely skeptical of this theory in view of the wartime experience of the way in which Stalin's amiability could be combined with lower-level obstructionism. Nevertheless, if it is true that the policy-making group now embraces a fairly wide circle, and if the predominant sentiment among these men now is that a prolonged detente must be sought, these facts can be of great importance for the future course of Soviet policy. It seems likely that with a wide group committed to this policy and acquiring a vested interest in it, and with no Stalin present to reverse it by ukase, the chances would be good that such a policy would not or could not be easily reversed. The present regime would probably also be more reluctant than was Stalin to disappoint the hopes which the current policy has obviously aroused among the Soviet people. Thus while Soviet policy at Geneva gave little promise of advancing at any early date from a conciliatory manner to conciliatory actions, there probably is good ground for believing that the manner will persist for some time.

- 8 -

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Future Estimate

10. Even though the Geneva developments would not require any serious changes in our current estimates, when all the evidence is in there will probably be some important nuances to be added. There will probably also be many views in the intelligence community varying from those given above, and in any case our pre-Geneva estimates will probably be regarded by most consumers as superseded. An attempt to coordinate views on Soviet intentions post-Geneva seems essential therefore. To be useful, an NIE should be scheduled for mid-September, well in advance of the October meeting of foreign ministers, but with the date left flexible in order to take account of Adenauer's visit to Moscow. The Board therefore intends to recommend to the IAC that an estimate on post-Geneva developments in Soviet policy, already tentatively agreed upon by the IAC, be definitely scheduled.

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FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

- 9 -

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